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UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE
Bureau of Agricultural Economics
Division of Program Surveys

reserve

COMPLAINTS ABOUT VARIOUS RATIONING PROGRAMS

The Division of Program Surveys recently completed a study for the Office of Price Administration on the experience and reaction of fuel oil users to the fuel oil rationing program. Among others, the following question was asked, "How do you feel about the whole program of rationing, not only fuel oil, but the whole idea of rationing?" Interviews were taken between April 12 and April 26, 1943.

In answering this question 204 of the 1116 respondents criticized some one of the various rationing programs (excluding fuel oil rationing). This does not mean that only one-fifth of this sample or of the population at large have criticisms to make of rationing. The respondents were not asked for their estimation of particular programs and the criticisms which they volunteered have value only in indicating the relative acceptability of the various programs and of the different aspects of individual programs.

It must be noted that the sample from which these criticisms were obtained was not a cross-section of the total public. The respondents were all holders of rations for fuel oil and were distributed throughout 34 counties along the East Coast and in the Midwest. Areas with large numbers of fuel oil users were heavily represented in the sample as opposed to areas where coal heat was predominant. Both lower and higher income groups were included, inasmuch as the users of both space heaters and central furnaces were interviewed.

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Meat Rationing was More
Complained Against Than Any
of the Other Rationing Programs

Two-thirds of those respondents who offered any criticism of any specific rationing program (excluding fuel oil rationing) objected to some feature of the meat rationing program. This incidence of complaints was not approached by any of the other five rationing programs mentioned. Coffee rationing seems to be regarded as the least objectionable (Table 1).

Table 1. Incidence of Complaints Against Specific Rationing Programs *

Rationing Programs	Percent of Complaints
Meat	67%
Canned goods	15
Sugar	15
Shoes	14
Gasoline	14
Coffee	9
Number of cases	204

* The percentages in this table do not total to 100 percent since some respondents criticised more than one program.

Most of the Complaints About
the Various Rationing Programs
Emphasize the Smallness of the Rations

When the criticisms of the meat rationing program are examined, it becomes apparent that most of the complainants are dissatisfied with the size of their ration (Table 2).

Table 2. Complaints about the Meat Rationing Program

<u>Complaints</u>	
Too many things included in meat ration	23%
No provision made for war-workers in heavy industry	16
Ration doesn't give enough meat	16
Ration not big enough for small families	13
Program is unnecessary; plenty of meat	12
No provision made for lunch meat	11
Regulation of supply is bad	5
Can't buy meat in small quantities	2
General complaint, no specific item	3
	<u>100%</u>
Number of complaints	149

The criticism most commonly offered is that butter and oil are included with meat on the meat ration. The supposition of the consumers who raise this objection apparently is that their ration of meat would automatically increase if these extra items were put on a separate ration. A very few complaints were made about the regulation of the meat supply and about the supposed inability to buy meat in small amounts under the rationing regulations.

Half of the complaints about the rationing of canned goods object that the present point values are too high (Table 3).

Table 3. Complaints about the Canned Goods Program

Complaints

Point values are too high	47%
Program is unnecessary; plenty of food	23
No provision is made for babies	10
Program makes people buy more than they did before	7
General complaint, no specific item	13
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	100%

Number of complaints	30
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Most of the complaints about sugar rationing express the belief that the ration is inadequate (Table 4).

Table 4. Complaints about the Sugar Rationing Program

Complaints

Ration is inadequate	70%
Program is unnecessary; plenty of sugar	27
General complaint; no specific item	3
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	100%

Number of complaints	30
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The only specific complaint about the shoe rationing program which occurs with any frequency is the objection that children are not sufficiently provided for (Table 5).

Table 5. Complaints about the Shoe Rationing Program

Complaints

No provision is made for children	66%
Program is unnecessary; plenty of shoes	10
People buy more now than they did before	3
General complaint, no specific item	21
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	100%
Number of cases	29

Complaints about the gas rationing program are scattered. Some respondents think war-workers are not getting enough gas; others believe the East is being unfairly treated in comparison to the West (Table 6).

Table 6. Complaints about the Gas Rationing Program

Complaints

Essential workers do not get enough gas	32%
Gas should be rationed equally in the East and West	25
Program is unnecessary; plenty of gas	14
General complaint, no specific item	29
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	100%
Number of cases	28

None of the 19 complaints about the coffee rationing program mentioned any specific aspect of the program. All were of a general character.

